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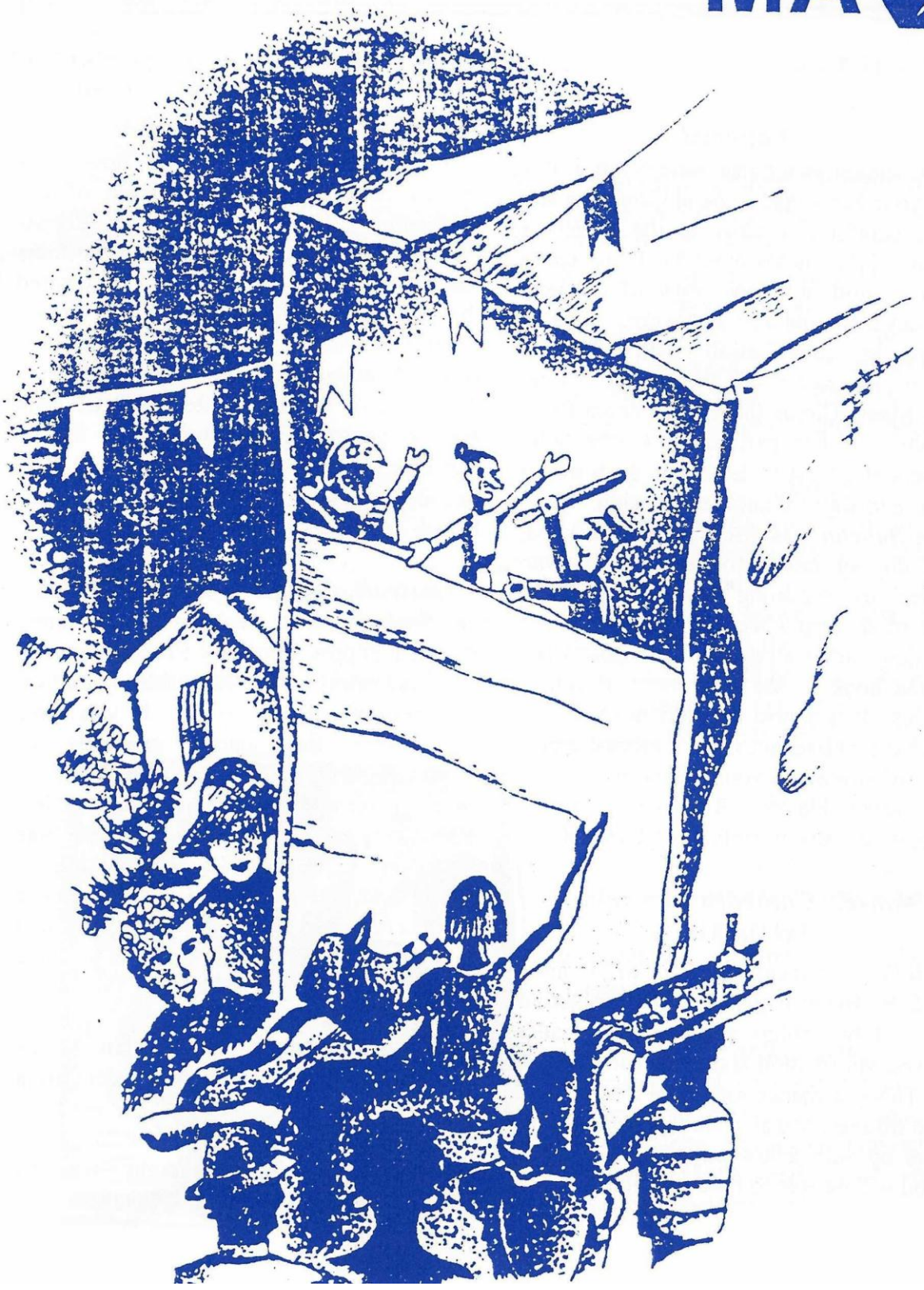
BRITISH UNIMA



# BRITISH UNIMA CENTRE BULLETIN

EDITOR - ROBERT FOWLER

MARCH 1998 NO 97


## *Editorial*

Firstly, apologies for this issue being a little late – your editor had to be in Cambodia at a time uncomfortably close to the *Bulletin*'s deadline. I did, on the other hand, manage to obtain a good bird's-eye view of puppetry while out there and also discovered, quite by chance, in conversation with Delphine Kassem (not exactly a Khmer name), owner of the Magic Circus theatre in Phnom Penh, that she and her partner were (the sole) members of UNIMA. However, such stories will have to wait for another occasion.

The *Bulletin* was discussed at the AGM, and I do not intend to weary those who attended by repeating my remarks here except to say that I was very pleased to see some new names alongside the regulars last year and hope to see even more of you in print this. It is almost certainly not true that we all have a novel in us, but a modest article or two of interest to your fellow-members is quite another matter. Remember too that comments are always welcome. That's it.

## *Non-Ex Cathedra Remarks*

Ray DaSilva

This *Bulletin* contains details of the London part of the Belgo-British Festival, organized for us by John Phillips, and a separate leaflet gives you information about the Birmingham slice. This is a chance for us see a number of foreign troupes, and also another opportunity to meet up with fellow puppeteers. I hope that you will be able to take advantage of it.

It is particularly gratifying to witness the more general, camaraderie which now exists in this country between members of our profession. When the Midlands Puppet Forum (my local) held it's biannual business meeting at Nottingham recently, I anticipated that there would be no more than half-a-dozen in attendance, because of the distances involved for most, but no, there were over thirty of us. The Committee of BrUNIMA are very grateful to that lively group for the part they played at our last AGM, and also, for their ready cooperation in the Belgo-British Festival

## *Festivals, Competitions & Courses*

*The Soul of the Rice Fields*: The Vietnamese National Puppet Company from Hanoi will be appearing at Riverside Studios, Hammersmith, 15-18 April. If you have never seen this unique spectacle of boisterous, brightly coloured water puppets enacting scenes from rural life (the last opportunity to do so in this country was 1993, if I remember aright), may I recommend you repair the omission. The puppets form part of a larger festival devoted to Vietnamese arts, including fine art and music, at a number of venues. A full colour brochure is available.

If you want further information, please telephone The Vietnam Festival Information Line on 0171 207 6928. Tickets available from Riverside box office on 0181 237 1111. More details and photographs will be available in the next issue of *Animations*.

Just a reminder that the bountiful British Puppet & Model Theatre Guild's Festival of Puppetry will be taking place at Rhos-on-Sea, Conwy, North Wales, 20-22 March. Lots of varied shows and an exhibition plus demonstrations rounded off by an auction. Tickets available on the day, or in advance for Guild members from Peter Charlton, 65 Kingsley Avenue, West Ealing, London W13 OEH (tel/fax 0181 997 8236). Full details are available in the Guild's March *Newsletter*. If you went to the last bash there, organized by Chris Somerville, you will not want to miss this opportunity.

We learn that the Thai arts festival planned here, which would have included puppetry, has been cancelled (owing to the current economic difficulties suffered by the country).

Michel Bouvet (of France) has been awarded first prize in the 1997 European Puppet Theatre Festival Graphics competition by an international jury consisting of 19 members. The theme was "European Puppet Theatre Festival Graphics 1987-1997." Bouvet's winning poster, in a large field of 82 entries from 14 countries, was for the Festival des Théâtres de Marionnettes à Charleville-Mézières 1991. The new theme of the competition, inaugurated by Gent's Europees Figurenteatercentrum and Brussels' Ombres et Silhouettes* last year, is "Puppet Theatre Productions for Children." Companies interested in taking part should send at least three copies of their poster to Europees Figurenteatercentrum (Trommelstraat 1, 9000 Gent, Belgium; tel 32 9 223 12 15, fax 32 9 225 45 45) by 15 June 1998.

Activities at the Institut in Charleville-Mézières this year include the following: *Approach of a Visual Language*, a workshop led by Philippe Genty and Mary Underwood, July 6–August 1; *Exploring Dramatic Space*, a workshop by Joseph Svoboda, August 24–29; *The Space of the Spectator*, a course by Roland Schön, August 10–21; and *Real Gestures / Virtual Environments*, a course by Sally Norman, August 4–16.

Full details can be obtained from the Institut Internationale de la Marionnette, 7, place Winston Churchill, 08000 Charleville-Mézières, France.

The latest *Festival Agenda*, an 11 page list of overseas festivals with contact addresses, for the next two years has been received from The International Federation of Centres for Puppetry Arts.

A copy may be obtained by sending a cheque for £1.00 made out to BrUNIMA to Lorraine von Gehlen, General Secretary – address on the back page of this *Bulletin*.

* Ombres et Silhouettes is one of the companies participating in the Belgo-British Festival.

**CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE**

Cover picture: a typical Mamulengo show from: *Fisionomia e Espíritu do ... Mamulengo* by Hermilo Borba Filho.


| | |
|---|---|
| Victorian Marionette Companies in Scotland 1860–1885 — John Phillips | 4 |
| Mamulengo Puppets: Comedy and Commentary — Cariad Astles | 8 |
| Eastbourne Toy Theatre Festival — Peter Peasgood | 15 |
| Top Tenner — John Furse | 18 |
| Puppet shows and customs in northern Dubrogea — Meg Amsden | 19 |
| Castelli in Aria — Dan Bishop | 20 |
| Peek at Swiss-German Puppetry — Mickey Aronoff | 22 |
| Media Watch | 26 |
| Backstage Backbiting | 29 |
| Obituary: Jan Wilkowski | 30 |
| Corrections, Deadlines | 31 |
| Internet report | 31 |
| Forthcoming | 31 |
| Belgo-British Festival Details | 32 |

## *Some Victorian Marionette Companies in Scotland 1860 – 1885*

John Phillips

Whilst an increasing amount of information has surfaced in recent years regarding Victorian marionette companies in England, Ireland and Wales, virtually nothing has been published, to my knowledge, about marionette companies working in Scotland during the 19th century.

Despite the general enthusiasm for marionettes in the second half of the 19th century, there appear to have been very few permanent marionette theatres, and those that were established only seem to have lasted for a year or two at most, with the notable exception of Old Waxy's at Anderson Stairs in Sunderland, which provided an extraordinarily varied programme of melodramas between the years of 1843 and 1904. Most of the Victorian companies toured in portable theatres or from hall to hall, either for a fixed term or until they had exhausted the enthusiasm of the surrounding public.

This survey must be far from complete as reports of performances in the press of the time are very sporadic but it does give some indication of the amount of activity there was in this field. The three major companies of the time – D'Arc's, Bullock's and Holden's – all thought it worth their while to visit Scotland, and whilst there were a number of others as well I have been unable to find any trace of a resident company or companies that toured Scotland on a regular basis.

Professor Horman was with Madame Ashington at the beginning of the sixties and had appeared with Madame Ashington's World Renowned Troupe of Marionettes at the Prince of Wales Concert Hall, Leeds, in December 1862, when his billing was "Eugene Horman's scientific display of natural magic." The following year he appeared at the Odd Fellows' Hall in Middlesborough with his Italian marionettes.

In 1864 he was travelling in Ireland with "particularly happy" dramas and "some of the simplest tricks – well performed." He visited the Sussex Hall, Kingston, Dublin, and spent the Autumn in Cork showing *Babes in the Wood, Christy Minstrels, The Chinese Fair* and a Pantomime. He also performed "some excellent conjuring," and his shows were well attended.

Until the Spring of 1866 Professor Horman remained in Ireland, appearing at the Rotundo, Dublin, and in County Cork and County Tipperary, but in April 1866 he was at Chester and by September 1869 he was at Dundee, doing excellent business – "Various melodramas and Pantomimes are represented by the figures which are admirably worked."

As no venues are named it is fairly safe to assume that by this time he had acquired a portable theatre, and certainly by March 1870, when he was at Johnston, reference is made to Horman's Marionette Theatre, which was later to be known as Horman's Ethescope Theatre. This was clearly a portable theatre such as many travelling theatres of the time would have used, it being set up wherever they stopped to give performances. Some of these portables were surprisingly large.

Walter Calver, who toured fairs in the north of England with his Royal Marionettes for over thirty years earlier in the century, claimed that his portable theatre could hold over 1,000 people.

Calver's portable theatre was especially commodious "on a scale of great splendour covered by wood, illuminated by gas, and decorated by first class paintings, drapery, models, chandeliers etc., – The interior consists of Front Boxes, Side boxes, Pit and Gallery."

But to return to Professor Horman – in 1871 he visited Kilsyth, Glasgow and Renfrew before returning to Dundee, after which date I have been unable to find any record of his travels.

At one time Horman had two companies touring Scotland and must have been at least fairly successful as he advertised for "musicians, parading clowns, sensation Niggers with performing Elephants or any

other novelty!" One of his companies seems to have stayed in Dundee for nine months with the familiar combination of magic and marionettes. The well known Manager, G W Cassidy, joined the company toward the end of this time, and the farewell attraction in October 1871 was *The Warlock of the Glen.*

Both D'Arc's and Springthorpe's came from Ireland to Scotland in 1871. Both featured Waxworks, Promenade Concerts, Cosmoramas and marionettes. Lambert D'Arc had been employed by Springthorpe when he first came to England from Paris in 1862 and worked for him for a year as a wax modeller before setting up on his own account. Mons. D'Arc announced a brief season with his automatical marionettes at the Operetta House, Edinburgh, in May 1871. He opened with the pantomime of *Blue Beard,* the drama of *The Babes in the Wood* and *Christy Minstrels.*

In July 1871 D'Arc advertised for figure workers to open at the Apollo Hall, Broadway, New York, in the April of the following year, but I have been unable to find any confirmation that this visit did in fact happen. There is a family tradition that D'Arc's went to America, and an advertising card in the collection of Leicester Museum cites not only America but also Siberia as one of the places the family visited.

The relationship between D'Arc's and Springthorpe's is complicated – D'Arc had begun his career in England modelling wax figures for Springthorpe and developed a similar range of attractions. To what extent they were competitors or associates it is difficult to decide, but when Springthorpe senior died it was D'Arc who advertised from his company at the Rotundo, Dublin, the "sale of a large number of wax heads, arms and hands of various description, very cheap." as "The remains of the late Springthorpe's Waxwork show in large and small quantities."

Springthorpe's had been in Dundee in April 1859, D'Arc was with them at Hull in 1862, but it is D'Arc who seems to have first gone into the marionette business (July

1869), and the first record I have found of Springthorpe's presenting marionettes is at the Mechanics' Hall, Aberdeen, in July 1871. D'Arc was then at the New Public Hall, Arbroath, continuing to the Thistle Hall, Dundee, at the end of the month. They both stayed in these towns with considerable success until the middle of October. D'Arc's were at the Corn Exchange, Kirkcaldy, for three weeks and then both they and Springthorpe's seem to have gone to Liverpool, which was where Richard Barnard joined Springthorpe to return to Dublin in time to open for Christmas. D'Arc however, stayed on in Liverpool to open at the Queen's Hall (W J Bullock, Lessee) in February.

Springthorpe's widow and children continued to tour with marionettes in Ireland and Southwest England, as described in Richard Barnard's memoirs.

Were D'Arc and Springthorpe in competition with each other or did they have some sort of arrangement whereby they gave mutual support? They do seem to have followed each other around, though both retained interests in Ireland. Why at the height of his success in Liverpool did D'Arc sell his show to Bullock and dash back to Ireland, where his "personal attention was required in Dublin"?

Although he very quickly became known as an enormously successful marionette proprietor, W J Bullock appears not to have had any previous experience before acquiring D'Arc's company.

Those interested in Bullock's triumphs at the St. James's Hall, London, and in America should read Speaight and McPharlin.

On his return to England from America Bullock had two companies touring the British Isles, and one of them, at the Mechanics' Hall, Glasgow, on 11 September, was described as "The grandest puppet show in the world". Bullock's season at Hengler's, also in Glasgow, was highly successful and continued until the end of October. It was claimed that 5,000 sought entrance on the opening night.

After Glasgow Bullock's show appeared at Paisley and Greenock before returning to England. His other company had been touring Kent and Suffolk. They were to return again to Scotland in November 1882, it was stated, after nearly twelve years, which suggests that one of his companies had been there in 1872, but I have yet to find corroborating evidence of this.

In 1875 Thomas Holden was at the beginning of his career and still establishing his reputation. His older brother John had been the favoured son of John Holden Senior and had taken over his father's business, leaving Thomas and another brother, James, to start up on their own.

Thomas Holden appeared at the Gaiety, Edinburgh, over the Christmas period (Bullock had been there only eight months previously) and continued there until March 1876. He then went on to appear for a month at Hengler's Circus, Glasgow, with his "Queen's Marionettes," opening on 15 April, and was praised for his costumes, manipulation and scenery.

After Glasgow, Thomas made a brief appearance at Moss's Varieties, Greenock, but this seems to have been his last appearance in Scotland. In August an action was brought against him by Bullock accusing Holden of breach of contract in defecting to a rival company during Bullock's Royal Marionettes' tour of America in 1874. From this time on Thomas Holden spent much of his time touring abroad, travelling as far afield as Russia, Turkey, Greece, Egypt and Algeria.

The next marionette company to appear in Scotland was Chester and Lee's French Marionettes and Negro Varieties, which followed the well worn trail by coming over from Dublin, where they had appeared at the Rotundo in November and December. They opened at Moss's Varieties, Greenock, with their pantomime of *Old Mother Goose* in January 1877.

Chester and Lee's were established in 1868 and claimed to be the only troupe of marionettes working the halls with instantaneous changes of scenery. They moved on to the Theatre of Varieties, Paisley, were at the Opera House, Dundee, in February, and the Music Halls, Aberdeen, in March.

Chester and Lee's were to visit Scotland throughout their eighty-year existence and continued well into the1930s. They were at M'Farlands Music Hall, Aberdeen, in January 1879 with the Pantomime of *Beauty and the Beast* and a Harlequinade.

In actuality the partnership between Chester and Lee appears to have broken up in the early 1880s, leaving Clarence Lee as sole proprietor.

From 1879 Chester and Lee's began a series of annual visits to the Scotia, Glasgow, and continued to tour all over the British Isles. Clarence Lee died in 1931, but the show continued for a little while after his death, and under the title of Gulliver's Marionettes was still touring Scotland in 1934.

The last company known to have visited Scotland during this period is that of George Bryant, who began in the early seventies and visited the Operetta House, Dundee, with his Marionette Minstrels in the Autumn of 1874. Many companies included an item based on

the Nigger Minstrel Shows of the time, but during the twenty year period in which he toured the halls Bryant seems to have done nothing else. Reviews and adverts refer to there being twelve in number with singing of a superior order, extremely comical jokes and a stump speech. They were at the Royal Music Hall, Glasgow in September and Moss's Varieties, Edinburgh, in October 1882.

Other marionette companies continued to visit Scotland, and resident companies were to be established in the 20th century, but Bullock's petered out in 1885, appearing in a mixed bill (something W J Bullock would have scorned to do at the apogee of his success). D'Arc's and Thomas Holden travelled increasingly abroad; George D'Arc settled in China, but William D'Arc returned to tour England into the thirties.

The list shows the known frequency of marionette companies visiting towns and cities in Scotland, and it is probably not surprising to discover that Glasgow was visited marginally more times than anywhere else, though Dundee and Edinburgh come a close second. Dundee was entertained by Professor Horman for nine months in 1871 and by D'Arc for three months during the same period. Edinburgh received Bryant's and Bullock's companies in close succession in the Autumn of 1882.

It is surprising that during a period of a quarter of a century when so many marionette companies with portable theatres were touring elsewhere it was possible to find only one such in Scotland, but even so there was a very interesting mix of companies and there may well have been many more.

Illustrations for this article are from *Thomas Holden et ses Fantoches.* by Louis de Moranges, 1879.

**Marionette Companies in Scotland 1860 – 1885**

Aberdeen
- 1871 Springthorpe, July - October
- 1876 Bullock, October
- 1877 Chester and Lee, March
- 1879 Chester and Lee, January

Arbroath
- 1871 D'Arc, July

Dumfries
- 1875 Bullock, August

Dundee
- 1869 Horman, September
- 1871 Horman, February - October
- 1871 D'Arc, July - October
- 1874 Bryant, October
- 1876 Bullock, September
- 1877 Chester and Lee, February

Edinburgh
- 1871 D'Arc, May - June
- 1872 Bullock, ?
- 1875-6 T Holden, December - March
- 1882 Bryant, October
- 1882 Bullock, November - December

Glasgow
- 1871 Horman, July
- 1875 Bullock, September - October
- 1876 T Holden, April - May
- 1877 Bryant, September
- 1879 Chester and Lee, January
- 1881 Chester and Lee, April
- 1883 Chester and Lee, March

Greenock
- 1875 Bullock, November
- 1875 T Holden, May
- 1877 Chester and Lee, January

Johnston
- 1870 Horman, March
- 1874 Bryant, April

Kilsyth
- 1871 Horman, June

Kirkcaldy
- 1871 D'Arc, October - November
- 1876 Bullock, August

Paisley
- 1875 Bullock, November
- 1877 Chester and Lee, January

Renfrew
- 1871 Horman, September

Those who attended Charleville in 1994 or who have read the well-illustrated, informative catalogue *Marionnettes en Territoire Brésilien* (still available), which accompanied the exhibition there, will have more idea than most of traditional Brazilian puppetry, but, even so, I suspect you will learn – very enjoyably – a good deal more from Cariad's article. This paper was delivered to the Annual Conference for Luso-Hispanic Humor Studies, 27 9 97, in Philadelphia, USA, and will be presented for publication in Conference Proceedings.

## *Mamulengo Puppets: Comedy and Commentary*

Cariad Astles

Describing the Mamulengo show, Fernando Augusto Gonçalvez Santos says of the puppeteer: **"The main objective of the mamulengeiro is laughter."**[1]

He continues: **"The mamulengeiro is an artist of laughter. Laughter is his main concern and intention. His greatest satisfaction and reward ... is the people's laughter. So to make them laugh is the most important challenge that his role as mamulengeiro puts upon him."**[2]

Mamulengo is a form of popular puppet theatre in Northeast Brazil. Early records of puppetry in Brazil are scarce but it is reasonable to assume that, like Cortes, who included a puppeteer in his expedition to Hibueras,[3] the Portuguese introduced the puppet show to Brazil during the 16th-century either as a means of entertainment for their own troops or for religious instruction to the indigenous people. Both are likely. The Mamulengo show today shares many elements of improvisation, anarchy and obscenity with its European counterparts: the English Punch, the Spanish Don Cristobal, the German Kaspar and so on. The Mamulengo show has, however, moved away from the European popular puppet show in its visual aspect, and in styles and content of performance. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate some of the ways through which the Mamulengo puppets comment on their political and social situation and the beliefs and attitudes of their audience through comedy and play. I will first look at ways in which the puppets get the better of their oppressors; I will then look at the verbal text and the way it is constructed.

Although the first Mamulengo shows expressed Biblical and moral themes, by the end of the 19th century the use of the profane was commonplace.[4] During the 20th century the Mamulengo show has mixed material from northeastern mythology, political and local events, domestic concerns and moral issues in a hilarious juxtaposition of content which can lurch from hell to the sugar cane field, from the factory to the bottom of the sea in the space of two scenes with no apparent logical or linear progression. The "story" is usually further fragmented by scenes of music and dance which, again, have no bearing on the plot. The puppeteers themselves are usually poor; they often have another job – generally manual or agricultural labour – since puppetry doesn't pay, and – at least until fairly recently – have often been illiterate. Their audiences likewise came from the working classes, on plantations or amongst the urban poor. The shows are largely presented through the mouths of the anti-heroes, the most commonly known ones being Benedito, Simao or Professor Tirida. These characters are usually black, with the intention: **"of painting the black man's courage, pointing out the value of the black race."**[5]

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[1] *Mamulengo – um povo em forma de bonecos*; Fernando Augusto Gonçalves Santos, Funarte 1979, p 64

[2] Ibid; p 64

[3] *Theatre in Latin America*; Adam Versenyi; CUP, 1993, p 1

[4] For a description of the history of Mamulengo, see *Fisionomia e Espiritu do Mamulengo*; Hermilo Borba Filho; INACEN; 1987

[5] Ibid: p 118

They express their vision of reality through an energetic and satirical spirit: they are mischievous, irreverent, lazy, obscene, full of trickery but well equipped with strategies for their noisy and defiant survival. Their solution is often comic violence, but the blows are directed at their oppressors, those who uphold cultural and religious hegemonies. Thus they participate in Bakhtin's carnivalesque vision: the upending or reversal of the prevailing world order, the ritual humiliation of figures of authority through violence or cuckoldry and their incarnation of the grotesque body. Let us look at some examples. The texts and performances I will refer to are descriptions or transcriptions of performances recorded by two researchers in the field, Hermilo Borba Filho and Fernando Augusto Gonçalves Santos, the latter a puppeteer of some repute himself. The first two poke fun at a priest. They come from shows performed by Mestre Otilio and Mestre Antônio Biló.

a)

*Priest: Good evening, you bunch of ragamuffins! I am the Holy Father, I see weddings, confessions, baptisms, excommunications, the lot ...*

*Simao: Oh Vicar, I wish to confess!*

*Priest: Well then, my son, you must say "By our lady."*

*Simao: By our lady of Santa Cruz, bitch's milk with cous cous ...*

*Priest: But my son, this is not "By our lady"!*

*Simao: By our lady of Santa Ureia, meat of pig, fat of oveia* (sheep) ...

*Priest: Oh my son, tell me your sins.*

*Simao: My sin is a bunch of bananas in a tin ... My sin is a pig that I left in the sty, who was nicked from me by a thief passing by ...*

*Priest: No, no I don't want to hear about pigs, I want you to say "Our Father."*

*Simao: Not ours, coz the pig was mine!*[6]

Simao goes on to recite "Our Father" full of obscenities. The second shows a lecherous priest.

b)

*Priest: Confession for a girl lasts two hours, for a married woman an hour and a half, for a widow one hour and for an old woman three minutes.*

*Mateus: And for me?*

*Priest: The Bishop hasn't sent through the rules for hearing men's confessions. Confession is a woman's thing.*[7]

The priest soon falls in love with one of his "confessees," is discovered and beaten by her father, and the scene ends with the police bursting in and then arresting them all.

The search for work and work conditions are common themes. In Mestre Ginu's *The Bravery of Professor Tirida on Colonel Javunda's Plantation* Professor Tirida comes looking for work:

*Simao: You ... want work?*

*Tirida: I do. Tell me one thing, Simao, sir, do you pay the minimum wage here?*

*Simao: Coming with demands before you've done a stroke of work? Don't you want to work?*

*Tirida: I do.*

*Simao: ... There's a hoe.*

*Tirida: Ah! Yes ... How much do I earn?*

*Simao: Four cruzeiros.*

*Tirida: Very good, Simao, sir, I'm going.* (goes off and returns) *Simao, sir, Simao, sir, tell me one thing: is there any water nearby?*

*Simao: Of course!*

*Tirida: Very good, I'm going.* (goes off and returns) *Simao, sir, Simao, sir, tell me one thing: what time is lunch?*

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[6] Gonçalves Santos; pp 130-1

[7] Ibid; p 97

*Simao: Lunch is at eleven o'clock!*

*Tirida: Very good.* (goes off and returns) *Simao, sir, Simao, sir, tell me one thing: what time do we go home?*

*Simao: In the evening, at sunset!*

*Tirida: Yes, sir, I'm going now.* (goes off and returns) *Simao, sir Simao, sir, tell me one thing: what's the boss's name?*

*Simao: Are you an anarchist or what? His name is Colonel Javunda, OK????*

*Tirida: Ah, now I know.* (goes off and returns) *Simao, sir, Simao, sir, where do I sharpen the axe?*

*Simao: What is this ...? What else do you want to know? I'm going to have you thrashed!*

*Tirida: Oh, no, no, no, sir. Do you know what my name is, sir?*[8]

And we will come to his name a little later in this paper. The scene described would be full of comic entrances and exits and buffoonery but it can also be seen as a social commentary. This exchange, although typical, does not, however, mean that all mamulengeiros share a specific political vision and it would be naive to consider Mamulengo as any form of agit-prop. One mamulengeiro cited a common phenomenon in electoral campaigns where puppeteers work for any candidates who would be willing to pay them, including opposing candidates on the same day. The Mamulengo show does not present a single vision of a carnivalesque alternative world order. Critics of Bakhtin have questioned his notion of a socialist utopia which exists outside official culture. Stallybrass and White, for example, in their discussion of the marketplace, point to the multiplicity of ideology and experience within the market place which stands at the crossroads between the local and the foreign world, between the world of business and the world of pleasure.[9] Bearing this in mind, and considering the Mamulengo show as the equivalent of the market place, I would now like to consider the text of the show and the way in which it is created.

Sherzer and Sherzer in *Humor and Comedy in Puppetry* suggest that puppets are inherently funny and list some of the ways through which comedy is created:

**"inanimate, often small objects, behaving like humans and animals; physical buffoonery and slapstick; an exuberance of word play; stereotyping, gross exaggeration, and degradation of human and animal behaviors; ethnic and social caricature; exaggeration and play with well-known stories or story types; ... social, political, and individual satire and commentary; breaking of ordinary rules of etiquette; scatological and sexual behavior not permitted by performing humans ... noises of many types also emanate from these puppet mouths and other orifices of these little bodies – shouts, screams, whistles, cries, whispers, weeps, laughs, nose blows, snores, yawns, coughs, sneezes, groans, grunts, burps and farts."**[10]

The Mamulengo show is improvised; the puppeteers have set characters and scenes but the performance text is a creation of puppeteers, musicians and audience. I have already stated that one of the prevailing features is that it is anti-linear and anti-logical. In Mestre Ginu's *Adventures of a Crazy Widow* we find Professor Tirida consoling a widow whose husband has died. He agrees to find jobs for her children:

*Tirida: Ah! For Manuelzinho I'll sort out a job scrubbing black vultures until they're white – any good, comadre?*

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[8] Borba Filho; pp 95-6

[9] *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, Peter Stallybrass & Allon White; Methuen, 1986

[10] *Humor and Comedy in Puppetry*, Dina Sherzer & Joel Sherzer; Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1987; pp 3-4, 48

*Widow: Fine, compadre.*

*Tirida: What's the other one called?*

*Widow: The other one's called Toinho.*

*Tirida: Comadre, I can get a job for Toinho in the fridge, drying blocks of ice. Any good, comadre?*

*Widow: Fine, compadre.*[11]

Mestre Otilio performs a similar story of a widow:

*Old Man: What are the names of your three children?*

*Widow: They're called February, March and April ... My husband was so good to me ... when he went to market, he used to bring me all kinds of soft things!*

*Old Man: Such as?*

*Widow: He brought me banana skins, fruit skins, mango skins ... He was so good to me!*

*Old Man: But why are you crying?*

*Widow: ... He was so good in bed!*[12]

We also find the exuberance of words: words to be celebrated and enjoyed for the sheer sound of them and the exaggeration of sound which accompanies this. We can consider this one of the areas where genuine play occurs. Words and sounds are suggested, examined, elongated, abbreviated, mispronounced and exaggerated. The mamulengeiro thus displays a high awareness of the linguistic manipulations s/he employs, and is able to subvert these by suggesting that words do not have a fixed and finite quality, but are malleable things to be played with. This has a double effect of reinforcing the existing sociolinguistic structures, by manifesting an awareness of their limitations, and then breaking those rules. The exuberance of word-play takes sounds into a realm where they are used for their sound rather than their meaning. There is a sensual appreciation in experimentation. We find in the performance already cited, *The Bravery of Professor Tirida on Colonel Javunda's Plantation,* Professor Tirida introducing himself:

*Tirida:* (enters) ***Good evening. Here comes Professor Tirida. Well, that's not really my name; my name is a little bit big because I come from the country. My name is always bigger than other people's. I am called Tirida Loterio Conrado Negreiro de Albuquerque de Lima da Costa Leao do Rego da Cunha Machado Barbosa Lele Castanha Direita da Chica Bicuda and more and there it is! That is my name. Well, it so happens that I've come here to tell you about my adventures, but they happen on Colonel Javunda's plantation. He's not here. Oh, here he comes.*** (exits)[13]

Tirida here displays exuberance in the announcement of his name. The language derives its own impetus from itself, which exists in opposition to linear narrative. The vocal text thus creates a separate system for communication which is not based on cause and effect. In the following extract from the

[11] Borba Filho, pp 107-8

[12] Gonçalves Santos, p 132

[13] Borba Filho, p 91

same performance we can see how the impetus for each line springs from the previous one:

*Woman: Good day, Simao.*

*Simao: Good day. What have we here?*

*Woman: What we have here is that my son Mane cut his foot off with the hoe.*

*Simao: And so what: So what if he's cut his foot off with the hoe?*

*Woman: It's just that he can't work.*

*Simao: Can't work? He can too! Hasn't he got another foot? Only got the one, has he, eh?*

*Woman: But it's not possible, Simao, sir.*

*Simao: What are you saying? Oh my God! What is this?*

*Woman: Simao, sir, only one foot!*

*Simao: And so what? Doesn't a banana tree only drop one bunch? So why can't a black man work with only one foot? He puts the other one in his pocket and comes to work ... Go on or I'll chuck you off the land, get it?*

*Woman: But I have six children!*

*Simao: Don't care.*

*Woman: There's Mariquinha, there's Mane, there's Jose, there's Joao, there's Teresa ...*

*Simao: Teresa that big one? She can stay. The rest of you piss off, she stays.*[14]

A similar impetus occurs in the following extract from *The Adventures of a Crazy Widow:*

*Widow: My husband Brecho died, compadre.* (cries) *Ui, ui, ui!*

*Tirida: Comadre, don't cry. It is sad indeed for the dead when they don't get to heaven, but for us who stay, we can carry on having fun! The dead have no more fun. Comadre, can you read, write and count?*

*Widow: Compadre, I know everything from "a" backwards.*

*Tirida: Can it be true? I'd never have believed it. Comadre, do this: if you know everything from "a" backwards, you can become a typist. No problem.*

*Widow: Yes, compadre, but I still don't know how I'll manage.*

*Tirida: Yes, yes, comadre, but that's no problem. This is what you must do: you must dance, play samba ... have fun.*[15]

The widow, protesting that she doesn't want to look like "an old fart," begins to dance until she can't stop, even dancing with Satan, who takes her off to hell. The comedy in these extracts also comes from the complete non-application of reason or intellectual understanding to fairly brutal situations, and from the sudden changes of subject. We see here a number of social issues touched upon: in the first extract, working conditions for (black) men on plantations, the dependence of whole families on plantations not only for

[14] Borba Filho, pp 92-3

[15] Ibid; pp 107-8

their livelihood but also for their accommodation, and potential sexual abuse; in the second, the importance of financial survival. These serious issues are dealt with comically. We therefore find that Mamulengo can be situated within the realm of the comic grotesque – ie the uniting of two incongruous ideas, the comic and the terrifying, within a single site.[16]

Frequent use is made in Mamulengo of the language deciding its own rhythm and rhyme. The rhymes may be nonsensical; the notion of linking words to each other because they rhyme subverts the whole notion of language being specific-based. When words fail to perform their normative function, communication enters a different realm and reality itself is questioned. Mestre Otilio has a scene where a teacher is encouraging a pupil to recite the alphabet:

***Professor:*** ***... my son, read here: a be ce de e efe ge aga ....***

***Pupil:*** ***..a be ce de e...efe ge caga*** (shit)....[17]

A simplistic and commonly used device, yet one which relegates the very structure of the written (ie the official) word to bodily function.

Audience participation is commonplace and an expected part of the action itself. This openness of the performance, where interruptions and interjections are not considered as "extras" but an integral part of the performance, is crucial. They create the possibility for change of action, diverting it or adding new elements for discussion. The puppeteers slip in and out of the supposed story in order to engage in dialogue with the audience directly. The performance is therefore a cocreation by audience and performers alike; the text becomes a polylogic text, differing radically from "high" drama where character, text and action are fixed, and becomes a site where many voices of equal value are heard and a collective working out of issues, problems, beliefs and attitudes takes place. This elasticity of text is perhaps the single most important feature of the verbal communication; the involvement of the audience constantly implies an assessment of the action and characters, and frequently the audience's assessment of each other. The Mamulengo show, therefore, does not exist in order to present a story; it exists and functions in order to create this kind of dialogue/discussion. And to elaborate further, the show does not present a single satisfactory solution to discussion; it reflects a world view which operates on multiple levels. Let us look at the following interactions from *The Trickery of Benedito*:

***Quiteria:*** ***Well, daughter, people are already dancing. But my daughter isn't going to dance with any Tom, Dick or Harry. My daughter is too young.***

***Voice (from crowd):*** ***How old is she?***

***Quiteria:*** ***My daughter is sixty-two.***

***Voice:*** ***What about you?***

***Quiteria:*** ***I'm eighteen.***

and, later in the same performance:

***Chiquinha*** (dancing)***:*** ***Aiiii!***

***Voice:*** ***Watch your daughter, Balula!***

***Balula:*** ***Eh?***

***Voice:*** ***Watch your daughter.'***

and, again:

***Ze das Mocas:*** ***This girl doesn't want to dance with me. What does she want?***

***Voice I:*** ***What? Why doesn't she want to dance with you?***

***Voice 2:*** ***Because Mister Ze is ugly, has a face like a dishcloth ...***

***Ze:*** ***Even cripples are better looking than me ...***

***Child's voice:*** ***Know why she doesn't like you?***

***Ze:*** ***Yes.***

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[16] For definitions of the grotesque, see *The Critical Idiom No. 24 – The Grotesque*; Philip Thomson; also *The Grotesque in Art and Literature*, Wolfgang Kayser; *Rabelais and His World*, Mikhail Bakhtin.

[17] Gonçalves Santos, p 133

*Child: Coz you're dirty, mate.*

*Ze: Ah, I'll go and change my clothes, my brother died and left me a trunk full of clothes ...* (disappears and reappears immediately)

*Voice 3: Ze das Mocas, where are the clothes?*

*Ze: I was just about to change clothes, when my sister came along and took the key to the trunk.*[18]

Through these three short extracts we see the familiar contact between audience and puppet and the developing improvisation; furthermore, the exchanges touch on several domestic concerns and attitudes: protection (or repression) of daughters, parental responsibility, the importance, in terms of sexual allure, of cleanliness, and even negative attitudes towards disability.

Puppets often appear to be comic just by performing; Borba Filho, for instance, reverses Bergson's theory of comedy being created through life taking on a mechanical aspect, since puppets, which start with a mechanical, or certainly inanimate, appearance, take on life[19]; we find the grotesque in the incongruity of inanimate material, which may be small, mimicking the animate, which may be big. Mamulengo shows proliferate in the manifestation of the grotesque body and its "lower bodily stratum" through burps, farts, comic eroticism, and so on. Much is made of caricature and exaggeration.

In this paper I have attempted to show how the Mamulengo show, through its various uses of the comic and the grotesque, opens up the site for discussion, criticism and analysis of social situations and attitudes. To refer back to Stallybrass and White, I agree with the authors that the market place, and in my analogy, the Mamulengo show, does not present a single world view which is preferable to, or in opposition to, the status quo, but in my view this does not diminish; rather, it enriches, in the sense that it is constantly capable of adaptation, change and of embracing many ideologies and levels of experience.

*Note: The Stallybrass & White work referred to in the main text, *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression*, essentially concerns itself with an examination of the carnivalesque in relation to certain social and historical images, such as "The Fair", "the Pig"(!), "the Sewer." The authors trace popular and bourgeois perceptions of these as contradictory constructs in popular consciousness and discuss how they have become symbols of carnivalesque inversion. In their chapter "The Fair, the Pig, Authorship", they criticise Bakhtin for considering the fair merely as a place for celebration outside everyday life, without considering its function within the world of commerce and economic transaction which was – and is – a necessary feature of daily reality. As puppeteers we know this well!

[18] Borba Filho, pp 127-131

[19] Ibid; p 227

## *WishTower Festival of New Model Theatre and Traditional Toy Theatre, Eastbourne, 24-26 October 1997*

Peter Peasgood

This year this Festival really took off. A change of venue (Ramsgate to Eastbourne), the strong support of Mel Myland and his family of the WishTower Puppet Museum, Mike Everett of the MDE Toy Theatre Press from Sheffield, an exhibition of Toy Theatres from Peter Baldwin, and the bookstall of Ray and Joan DaSilva meant that the weekend was not to be missed. Oversubscribed for weeks beforehand, with tickets sold out completely for all the shows, the many casual visitors on the day were unable to obtain entrance. Perhaps the only sadness was not to have the foreign players coming over and performing owing to the reduced funding. The fitting in of so many performances in the two limited spaces of the WishTower and the Heritage Centre required the personality of a diplomat. The toy theatre, although having a tiny proscenium, requires, I know, at least an hour to set up on two six-feet tables. For suffering for their art we must thank all the performers and particularly those giving nervy premiere performances. The Festival Director was Robert Poulter, a professional toy theatre player with all the confidence and razzamataz of an actor manager of one of the old touring companies. He is out to prove, I am sure, that the toy theatre is theatre in its own right and that it can be just as entertaining or controversial as its full-size cousin. In this endeavour he encourages local schools, and we saw three shows by pupils from The Cavendish School who with their drama teacher had attended workshops and gave us very worthwhile performances. I liked, in particular, the way these students had developed their own scripts and created original characters for the plays.

The festival began at Mel Myland's WishTower Puppet Museum with a short welcoming speech and wine to follow. In the limited space it was standing room only for the "quicky" performances. Brian Rogers worked one scene of *Hansel and Gretel*, using his favourite Schreiber scenery and figures on a beautiful antique English stage. Brian is an enthusiastic and expert performer of the standard printed coloured Danish, German and Austrian theatre sheets and excels at the fairy story. He blended Humperdinck's music to suit the action. Later in the festival, at The Heritage Centre, Brian showed us his *The Tinder Box* (Hans Anderson), again using printed sheets but set inside his reproduction Royal Opera House, which became a centre of great interest. This play has very lovely scenes in cellars, woods and palaces as well as a dog with animated eyes. Robert Poulter, in contrast, vigorously acted to frenetic rap music *I Am the King of Nineveh*, based upon Assyrian reliefs in the British Museum. Figures and scenery flew everywhere in the high-speed changes. Robert operates the slot method of bringing on the figures, which enables the scenery and characters to be changed with a quite spectacular horizontal movement. Well-planned and designed, the production becomes cinematic in its dissolves, back projection, and horizontally moving backcloths. In the same style we saw his *Konjunktur* and *Merry Margate* plays the next day. The first, a mechanistic political play set in the oilfields of Eastern Europe, was in direct contrast to the second, a saucy advertisement for Margate – both rendered with the same high efficiency. It is astounding that so much art work is displayed in a short time – perhaps in *Merry Margate* this increased the clutter on the playboard. What different opinions we all have about the presentation of toy theatre. In honour of Percy Press II, who recently died, Robert designed a fresh production of the 1827 Payne Collier *Punch and Judy* (MDE Publications). By using very large articulated figures, still based upon the Cruikshank drawings, it seems that knockabout and even death by clubbing can be successfully shown on toy theatre. My wife, Sylvia, and I did the voices live and,

thanks to the many Puppet Guild members assembled, there was no shortage of audience participation – even to a glorious "That's the way to do it" by everybody at the end. Percy would have been proud of us. The large size of these figures overcame the difficulties I had had when performing this work many times with Percy. It is sometimes not very easy to obtain a sense of theatre with the actors paralyzed in a single posture, and only the size of your thumb. For myself, I think this show strengthened my belief that a live performance with the lines spoken by the operator breathes vital life into the paper. An exception is the montage creation, where the action is backed only by well-chosen music, and the toy theatre then takes on the appearance of a slowly animated book of illustrations. But in a world of mass entertainment a lone, busy showman can have limited time and no other help, therefore we must tolerate the flat sound of a recorded voice spoken very close to a microphone and lacking somewhat in emotion and expression.

William West printed a Toy Theatre in 1820 (now in Pollock's Toy Museum, Scala St), while two years before, in 1818, the novels *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley and *Persuasion* by Jane Austen were published. Both these stories still attract audiences of millions. The former outlining the abuses of surgery and the myth of the Noble Savage, the latter dealing with the innocence of courtship and the marriage of middle-class provincials. Which novel is the more suitable for toy theatre? Mary Shelley was an admirer of her two colleagues Wordsworth and Coleridge and liked, in particular, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,* indicating her deep love of nature. We saw a production of *The Ancient Mariner* presented by school student Nathan Matthews of Christ Hospital, Horsham. On a small stage he gave illustrations of the poem to a spoken recorded voice. This work was very ambitious to do, but there was still the essence of the mysticism and fatalism of the poem, and Nathan is to be congratulated for

choosing and designing a drama from such a piece of literary Imagination and Fancy. Continuing in the same genre, *Bruges-La Morte* by Paul Edwards, derived from the photomontage novel of Rodenbach, gave us further dreamlike images. A young man searches for his dead wife against photo-backcloths of the alleys and bridges of Bruges. He follows a dancer from the Opera. Is this girl his wife, whom she resembles, or is it only his grief playing tricks. We sympathize with his haunted condition, and the sadness is given great strength by the use of the slightly tinted photographs. Natalie Farmer's modern fable, *Red Riding Hood Grew Up in Bluebeard's Castle* (again using photographs), was set in a street of suburban semi-detacheds. Once again the worlds of dreams and imagination were mixed with the ordinary, albeit murderous members of a family. These three works indicate one of the strengths of the modern school of small theatre, but are they Toy or New Model?

Lest we forget, these works are supported on the shoulders of a long tradition. George Speaight reminded us of this. He presented *The Sleeping Beauty in the Wood or Harlequin and the Magic Horn* by C Stanfield (Pollock), his remarkable memory serving him well in his live, spirited performance. First performed in 1849, at The Queens Theatre, the play unusually starts long after the first act christening, the

curse, and its fulfilment by the Wicked Fairy. The basic story of *The Sleeping Beauty* was first published in a collection alongside *Cinderella* by Giambattista Basile in 1634, and was extremely bawdy and ribald. In 1634 these fantasies had an unexpected erotic slant, but nevertheless the main purpose of these novelettes was concerned with the power of laughter. By 1849 this laughter had become the dominating plot in the dramatized theatre versions, and the addition of the Harlequinade helped the merriment along. George Speaight, with spontaneous wit and the use of what appeared to be a duck call, intermittently blown, gave us much pleasure. So much to do, so much to pick up and interchange, and at the same time say the lines – masterly is an understatement.

Barry Pointon gave us a little respite from performance by presenting his excellent slide lecture on the development of the modern theatre and its relationship to Toy Theatre. He gives this same lecture to general audiences unacquainted with our type of theatre, so spreading the word. It was pleasing to hear his well-written commentary, and perhaps another year the Festival committee would consider having such a non-performing interlude yet again. Joe Gladwin, with his hand-drawn designs and a freely adapted script, gave us *Drakula.* Joe pronounced it "Drakoolah." Like Frankenstein, *Dracula* (Bram Stoker, 1897) has become a familiar modern myth and has always been subject to many versions and parodies, even appearing on Sesame Street as a teaching aid. Even the immortal Bela Lugosi, who specialized in the part of the Count on stage and film, parodied himself with Lucan McShane in the film *Old Mother Riley Meets the Vampire* (1952). It is no surprise then that today's children need to watch videos of even more extreme Gothic Horror to frighten them behind the sofa.

Menelaus A Trojan Lord from *The Siege of Troy*

Joe delighted us with one such parody in live performance, cleverly altering his voice to suit each character – strangulated vowels being spread thickly throughout. I liked the way Joe ad-libbed when a nervous paper actor made an entrance too early. A delight for me and also an ambition satisfied was to see Barry Clarke's performance of the rarely seen *The Silver Palace* by G Almar, 1834 (Sadlers Wells). The archaic language, spoken live, enhanced the wonderful sets of underwater caverns and masses of fountains. It is obviously impossible in paper to reproduce totally this water masque, but I am grateful that it is still in Barry's repertoire. He told us that it is a play that is a favourite, and he has performed it from a young age. Almost all his life John Neill has had a passion for toy theatre, and at a Puppet Guild meeting some time ago he told us how, when a small boy, he was called into the headmaster's office to be given a present of a toy theatre, which was the start of it all. Now in retirement, and assisted by Elaine Tubby, he delights us with his skills. It takes a man of great enthusiasm and many months of patience to watercolour and to cut and mount such a large work consisting of the elaborate plain sheets of the drawings of Orlando Hodgson's *The Siege of Troy,* with its nearly 60 characters and eight scenes, each requiring at least six side wings and one or even two backcloths. In addition to this labour, John adapted the script to suit our modern ears and also memorized most of it. In life John is a mild-mannered man, but put him behind the cardboard, and the performance can hold us totally, each scene at curtain rise receiving a round of applause. Gladiators in the Arena, a grand procession to equal Aida, exquisite exuberant sets, an enormous wooden horse, the tragic fall of Troy by trickery and the most glorious music of Oldfield's *In Search of Troy.* Thank you John and Elaine for recreating this visual masterpiece, first performed at Astley's

Amphitheatre in 1833. At this point may I say that, although I perform using my own designs, it will be sad if one day these wonderful classical plays do not make an appearance. At the 10th Papiertheatertreffen at Preetz (12-14 September) only two companies were performing printed sheets: Invisius of Berlin with their *Rotkappchen* and Brian Rogers with his opera *Hansel and Gretel.*

When I saw that we were to have "A World Premiere" by Paul Edwards I felt that we were in, not only for a surprise, but a shock, since it was the creation of Alfred Jarry (1873-1907), the French poet and dramatist and the father of the Avant-Garde Theatre. I did not attend last year's festival and so I missed *Ubu Roi* (1896), but I know this play, the favourite of sixth-form drama students. Mère and Père Ubu are the energetic, psychopathic, foul-mouthed characters of *Ubu Roi, Ubu Enchaîné* (1900) and *Ubu sur la Butte* (1901). In these farces Jerry satirizes the greed and thirst for power of the French bourgeois. WB Yeats, at the first performance of *Ubu* in 1896, cried "... what more is possible? After us the savage God." It was indeed a savage God that we saw portrayed in *Caesar-Anti Christ.* Bold startling images moved before our eyes, held together by a powerful, doom-laden script. There were multiple Christs of gold, silver and bronze, a Christian Knight Templar, ancient Myth with the unicorn and the centaur, and even a little metaphysics ("The circle, once it has finished, falls into disuse. The straight line succeeds it, extending in both directions to infinity."). The work has rich literary metaphors such as this which create a poetic world of imagination totally enveloping the observer. Agree or disagree with its messages, Paul Edwards nevertheless brought *Caesar-Anti Christ* to our attention using great flair. An esoteric and disturbing piece of lost theatre.

Jarry went on to develop his theory of the absurd through pataphysics, which is the science of imaginary solutions, and which had such a following that a College of Pataphysics was founded in 1949. The weekend was stimulating theatre and we should be very grateful to Robert Poulter for sticking to his idealism and to Ray and Joan DaSilva and Michael Everett (recovering well after his serious illness) and lastly Mel Myland and his wonderful family. In the bar of the Jevington Hotel we gained an extra hour (the clocks going back), so that it became even more than usual, a smoky, noisy venue until the early hours.

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I was pleased to receive this follow-up to the passing reference in the last issue to the Anglo-Belgian artist James Ensor.

## *Top Tenner*

John Furse

Mask and Masque people will be delighted that *James Ensor – Theatre of Masks* (Barbican Centre, London, 11 9 97 - 14 12 97) featured amongst the majority of art critics' top ten exhibitions in 1997. Ensor, born 1860 died 1949, spent most of his life in the then-active fishing harbour and popular seaside resort of Ostend, where the proximity of the sea and the town's seasonal fluctuations, marked by its annual Carnival, were to be a constant influence. The Ensor family lived above their souvenir shop – now the Museum Ensorhius – stocked with carnival masks, chinoiseries, shells, and other consumer knick-knackeries. "I took refuge in the land of fools where the mask, with its violence, its brightness and brilliance, reigns supreme" is how the artist saw it – "Curious passions of a dotty Belgian" was critic Brian Sewell's London *Evening Standard* assessment of the Barbican showing, and in truth there is much to be said for both points of view. Ensor was an *oddity*, but then that was the fascination for those who see the theatre of masks, make-up and make-believe as a mixture of *madness* and a means of veiled social comment. *Dressing Up – Dressing Down,* the major Ensor retrospective, to be held in Brussels, 24 9 99 - 21 1 2000, has to be a BrUNIMA-Eurostar must.

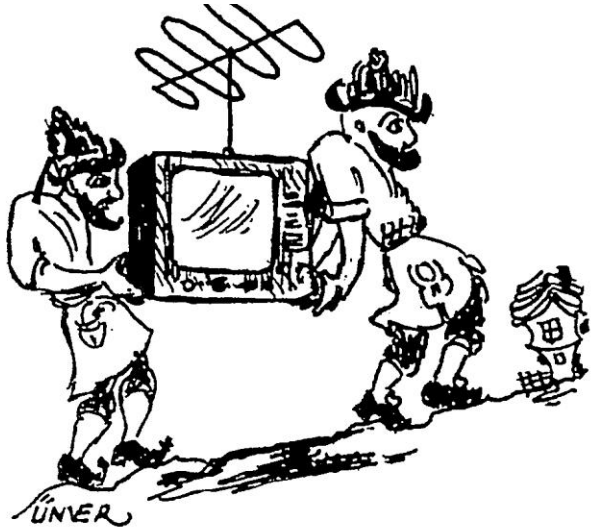
A sheaf of material on and related to the Eco-Puppets project in Romania has been received by the *Bulletin* from Meg Amsden of Nutmeg Puppet Company, which will be made available in the next issue. This is just an ethnographic taster.

## *Memories of Puppet Shows and Wedding Customs in Northern Dubrogea, Romania, Recounted to Meg Amsden by Folklorist Gheorghe Mihalcea, at Horia, Tulcea District, 4 10 97 – Translated by His Daughter, Nina Sirotenco-Mihalcea*

Puppet shows in the Karagöz (Turkish) tradition were seen at the annual festival to celebrate the church saint's day – the Hram – in Sfintu Gheorghe in Horia. (Dubrogea was part of the Ottoman Empire until the 1850s – the last part of Romania to be liberated.) Puppets were crude and rather similar to Punch and Judy – man gets drunk, beats up wife etc – harmless fun ....

Nina remembers when she was a child, in the late sixties, every school had a puppet booth, and teachers learnt how to do shows with their pupils. But Karagöz was frowned on by the regime: public shows died out and the school booths got destroyed and never replaced.

The other place puppet shows were seen was at weddings. Only newlyweds and married people were allowed to watch, as the purpose was to teach the young couple about sex and what to expect on the wedding night. Karagöz-style puppets again, grotesque and exaggerated – funny, explicit, bawdy shows. When the show was over, the Ariciul (Hedgehog) dance was performed by two men dressed up as hedgehogs in shaggy sheepskin clothing, with the wool pulled into points, wide leather belts and wooden phalluses strapped on. Not a pretty (*frumos*) dance, but suggestive, portraying the sexual act. The men stooped and jumped up and down, low jumps with both feet landing together, quite fast, singing a droning chant




Drawing from Karagözname by Ünver Oral. 1977

in 2/4 rhythm. The couple were then sent off to bed and had to display a blood-stained nightgown afterwards.

The next day, usually a Monday as weddings were on Sundays, a carnival was held with more dancing. Men in grotesque masks rode up and down the village on donkeys crying, "Be happy mothers-in-law! Be contented grannies!" The godmother took the bride's wedding crown (of artificial flowers and veil) and gave her a scarf to wear to show she was a woman. Nina remembers seeing men in grotesque masks riding around on donkeys when she was a child.

### *Rhapsod Popular*

First described to us by Romanian team leader Monţi Bouroş as men singing with leaves or carp scales between their lips, Gheorghe said someone in the next village used to do this with a fish scale jammed between two teeth on the bottom row, between teeth and lips, then sang past it. Monţi Bouroş said it gave an extraordinary sound, not unlike a kazoo. In the Delta it was a common pastime for fishermen in the winter months. There are still a few old men who do it, and she is going to try and find one who will show her.

### *Baba Dochia*

*Zilete* – 1-9 March. Baba Dochia is a wild woman who wears lots of coats made of animal skins. On 1 March she takes off a layer, and the weather begins to warm up, the snow begins to melt. Every day she takes off another coat, and by 9 March it is hot (theoretically, anyway!).

An account of a recent visit by Dan and Gemma Bishop to Como, Italy, as guests of the Associazione Teatro dei Burattini di Como – as part of their running programme of visiting puppet companies.

## *Castelli in Aria*

Dan Bishop

For those unfamiliar with Como, it is a moderately sized city with a beautiful cathedral and many theatres, situated at the end of a huge lake. It is overlooked by steep hills, and – beyond – the Alps. A funicular takes you on a seven-minute ascent to Brunate, which is at present the home of the Teatro dei Burattini di Como.

Gemma and I will remember this time spent in Como when recollections of other journeys have long faded in the memory.

There were three distinct stages to this visit: the happy memory of three days of performances to as wide a variety of audiences as is possible; the moment of absolute despair when *all* our valuables (save – thank heaven – the puppets) were stolen from under our noses in the hotel lobby; and, finally, the unfolding of a train of events during which those fundamental values of international friendship which underpin the structure of our organization became reality before our eyes.

Our hosts were Dario Tognocchi and Paula Rovelli of Teatro dei Burattini di Como, who live up in the mountain at Civiglio. We were based at Hotel Metropole & Suisse down in the city by the lakeside.

With nary a hint of the traumas to come, we flew into a very wet Bergamo airport. Dario and his son, Martino, met us and drove us into Como: first through mediaeval, then pre-Christian parts of the city, and, finally, up through winding and very narrow streets to their home at the top of the mountain, where the whole family made us welcome.

Almost immediately Daniela Paolucci arrived from Rome. We had already met Daniela (one of Punch's closest Italian friends) on various occasions – most recently in Castellammare di Stabia, near Naples, last July on the publication of her book: *Pulcinella e Punch: Due Tradizione a Confronto.* We were delighted to learn she had been invited to accompany us throughout this visit. Her translations, enthusiasm and her knowledge of the twin traditions of Punch and Pulcinella proved invaluable to us and the audiences we were to encounter in the next three days.

The first day dawned bright and sunny and was to remain this way throughout our stay. We embarked on an eventful whirl of shows in an extraordinarily wide variety of venues, ranging from a railway station platform in Milano; to a primary school in Como; a conference audience in the Azzossiono Carducci (the building which will soon provide the new home for the Burattini di Como); and an evening show in a village near Como, for which a huge family audience (including just one little sod ... you know the one!) gathered to welcome Punch in their very modern public building. In this last venue children had prepared numerous colourful banners depicting Punch, which were displayed in honour of our visit.

The next day, after a leisurely morning stroll around Como with Daniela, we took the funicular trip up to Brunate and Dario and Paula's theatre. This was a very happy show and once more attracted a huge and enthusiastic family audience.

Later, after a rather dramatic moment when our van ran out of diesel half way up the mountain, we finally arrived at a remote restaurant with breathtaking panoramic night views of the city below, and we shared a wonderful meal of pasta and polenta,

The final day saw three shows in and around Como – all for children, with ages ranging from 4 –6, 6 – 10, and 11 – 14 years.

Looking back, the three days of performances had been attended by audiences of every conceivable age group (except, perhaps, two years and under), and the knowledge that so many people had found pleasure in Mr Punch's Comical Tragedy gave me much satisfaction as we prepared to return home.

At 7.40 in the hotel lobby the following morning, disaster struck. By means of an artful, attention-diverting deception, a team of two thieves lifted a bag from under our noses and we lost passports, air tickets, our fee and other monies, credit cards, two cameras, keys, driving licence, UNIMA card, a book full of vital addresses etc, etc. However, the most severe loss of all was Mr Punch's Passport. This contained a record of rubber stampings from every overseas venue we have visited over the last few years, and cannot be replaced.

Anyone who has had a similar experience will know what the next few hours were like. A dazed succession of police interviews, flicking through the police rogues' gallery (we had subsequently realized Gemma had had a good look at the two thieves prior to the crime), calls to cancel and inform, constant self-reproach over how it could all have been avoided, calls to the UK to cancel shows and commitments, rebooking new flights for four days hence, the British Consulate etc, etc.

Immediately the manager of the Hotel Metropole & Suisse offered us free accommodation for the rest of our enforced stay and could not have been more helpful or sympathetic.

Meanwhile, Dario Tognocchi – one of our hosts – was hatching a plot which would reveal his true colours and those of the people of Como. He said to me – distraught as I was; "Dan, Dan – *op*timist, *op*timist."

Over the next few hours, Gemma and I were propelled from place to place like bemused billiard balls as Dario's plan quickly unfolded. It was immediately clear he is a popular figure in the city and has many friends and contacts.

By the end of the day we had given interviews for the two daily newspapers and the local TV station, and the foundations had been laid for five extra performances, to begin 36 hours later.

As the next day broke, everybody in Como knew the story of our crisis and the loss of Mr Punch's Passport. Even in bars people were coming up to us to sympathize, and later that day I did a live TV interview on a chat show, which gave us even more publicity for the coming performances.

At the end of this broadcast, we heard that the local tourist organization had donated 1 million lire (about £323) to our recovery fund.

The next day – my resistance lowered – I had developed a cold, which was affecting my throat, and a stomach virus (talk about Punch and Judy on the run!). But all this faded into insignificance when we saw how many school children had arrived at the Azzossiono Carducci for the first show. The large auditorium was packed and the show ... *bellissimo!*

The sheer momentum of goodwill carried us through the two days of shows (not to mention the odd glass of Port for the voice!), and by the end of it all, the money donated into the little basket by our fit-up was enough to offset our losses – even to the extent of the extra air fares we had had to buy to get home.

During that final evening – after all the intensity of work and emotion – we had a chance to shower, rest and then go out to the theatre: a modern play in a 350-year-old theatre. (We've seen these "mini Albert Halls" all over Italy. They have them in most towns and cities and they're always packed with *Giovanni Public!*)

We'll miss the climate of culture in Como. It doesn't seem class-related, just a way of life. We'll miss everyone: *Arrivederci, Como, a grazie mille.*

Postscript: The other day, we played back a message on our answerphone from a delighted Paula: "Dan – the passport of Mr Punch is found! In Milano."

## *A Privileged Peek at Swiss-German Puppetry*

Mickey Aronoff

Sandwiched between attending festivals in Charleville-Mézières and Schwäbisch Gmünd was, thanks to hosts Gustav and Marta Gysin of Riehen (Basel), Switzerland, a fascinating glimpse into the world of Swiss-German Puppetry. Many people will know Gustav from his long-time UNIMA association and for his work on *Figura*, the Swiss UNIMA German-French quarterly, of which he's been editor for 30 years. Gustav is now working on his penultimate issue of *Figura*, to be taken over soon by Elke Krafka, a lecturer at the University Institute of Theatre Sciences in Bern (but who presently lives in Germany). Marta, an artist-quiltmaker, also works in a wonderful bookshop near the University.

The following is a "diary" of notes from my experiences under the blazing Swiss sun at the end of September and beginning of October. It is not an all-inclusive guide to Swiss-German puppetry but remembrances of things I did, things I learned about. The auspicious climate gave us energy-packed food for the body and food for thought, including daily cornucopia servings of fresh figs, grapes and herbs from the Gysin garden, where I had my first and most pleasurable taste of rue.

Switzerland has an incredibly high density of either proper theatres or spaces dedicated to seasonal programmes of puppetry. There are at present 11, meaning almost every city has one. I was fortunate to visit three – in Zürich, Basel and Winterthur.

Not all Swiss puppeteers stay in Switzerland, however. An article on the Lempen puppets, now based in Skipton, is featured in the December issue of *Figura*. Liz and Daniel Lempen will be performing *Der Meerbueb* in Switzerland this winter.

### *Educational and Therapeutic Puppetry in Switzerland*

The Swiss Puppetry Association includes educational puppeteers, and *Figura* carries articles about educational and therapeutic issues.

The Swiss Therapeutic Puppetry Association is a section of the Swiss Puppetry Association and has existed for about 6-7 years. Its 70-80 members meet four times each year.

Switzerland is home to the Swiss Puppet Therapy Institute, directed by Kathi Wüthrich, puppeteer and puppet therapist. Also on the staff are Dr Gudrun Gauda of Frankfurt (Diplompsychologin) and Dr med Daniel Zindel (Psychotherapeut). The address is: Institut für Therapeutisches Puppenspiel, Unterfeld 4, 6374 Buochs, Switzerland; tel 041 64 18 31.

In Switzerland, you can work with therapeutic puppetry under someone else's licence, for example, a psychiatrist's or, if you have licensed status, on your own.

Margrit Gysin trained with the Swiss Puppet Therapy Institute and is now a practitioner when not performing around the world. I was very taken with her magical, primal performance, "Es war einmal...", at the first Baden festival – so much so that I saw it twice in one day!

I visited her with Gustav one evening. Margrit was excitedly preparing for a trip to Sikkim and to Bhutan, where she'll perform for, among others, the royal family, who saw her in Madras not long ago and asked her to return. Over a sampler platter of incredibly unusual Swiss cheeses and Swiss flower herbal tea, she spoke of her past traumatic visit to Zimbabwe, where ASSITEJ sponsors were not around to welcome their guests – nor did they show up at the venues where performances were planned. Margrit and a colleague were assaulted and robbed while walking to their hotel. Her colleague, a singer, is still trying to recuperate from a throat that may never heal.

When not performing, Margrit works in her home studio in therapeutic puppetry practice. Originally trained as a teacher in special education, she is licensed to work with children and does so in her home when not performing. She makes puppets with

children in the style of Gudrun Gauda of Frankfurt, who was her teacher, but she concentrates more on the performance aspects than on the craft. She has an incredible collection of "archetype puppets," many borrowed from former shows.

Walter Krähenbühl is a psychiatric nurse who has for a long time been very involved in therapeutic puppetry. I was happy to receive from him a lovely video from the Institut für Psychodrama und Figuration, which he made with a psychiatrist with whom he sometimes works, Dr Jean-Paul Gonseth. Gonseth's theory is that we all have many figures waiting to appear from the unconscious – he calls this "Figuration." He says that, whether we want to or not, we are all playing roles. We have an outer surrounding stage and an inner self stage. There is a route that goes in between the two. He feels puppetry is a good medium to represent ourselves. Walter states that no one knows what will happen when you make a puppet, but you have to accept what comes.

The video shows a technique for making puppets. The group which has made them performs with their own puppets and later talk about their lives. They next choose any puppet they want for psychodrama. The role of the puppet can be anything and can be used for dialogue or anything else. They can choose to enact reality or fantasy. They all sit in a circle, with the puppets interacting. Dr Gonseth comes in with a "neighbour" puppet to see what all the noise is about – he complains that they are too loud. By doing this, Dr Gonseth has given them some conflict to talk about. He then stands behind various people and engages in psychodrama. At one point, he says "There's a stranger outside. Who is he? I should have been told he's around." Dr Gonseth stops the action when the conflict is over, and the group talks about it. He talks about foreign elements that come into a family and how difficult it is. Everyone agrees. The video ends with a memorial to someone in a former group who has died. Walter is talking about the puppets she has made.

Ursula Tappolet is well known for her therapeutic puppetry and has published three books on the topic: *La Poupée au Petit Nez: La Marionnette dans L'Éducation*; *Élephantiades: La thérapie par le conte et la marionnette*; and *La Thérapie par la Marionnette et le Conte de Fées: La thérapie par le jeu et par l'art.*

A visit with the lovely Barbara Stengelin, nurse and artist (stone sculptor), centred around her involvement with therapeutic puppetry, to which she was introduced by Walter Krähenbühl. I was awe-struck by the power of her puppets.

### *Figuren Theater Bühlmann*

I was very privileged to see two Swiss performances two days in a row.

The first, *The Ladybird Who Wanted to Be a Bass* (Vom Mariechäferli wo gerne bassgyge worde wär), was a premiere held in the amazing studio space of Werner Bühlman, director of Figuren Theater Bühlmann in Rikon (address: Atelierder Tösstaller Marionetten, Neschwilerstr. 1, 8486 Rikon). Thanks to his kindness to an older man, Werner works out of a rent- and utilities-free top floor of an industrial building. A performer for twenty years, he uses all types of puppetry. However, he uses only one single type in each production.

This glove-puppet production, with original music played live, is an extraordinarily warm, humorous and well-played story about a ladybird's self-appreciation and self-acceptance, reached after a period of wanting to be something else. Werner wrote, directed and performed; Regula Isenschmid wrote and played the music; Kathrin Tchenar was an inimitably amusing puppeteer; and Margrit Steinman was the scenographer and puppet-maker.

It is possible that the person in the audience who enjoyed the performance the most was Werner's mother, as the performance was based on a story that she

told to him and his sister when they were children.

Afterwards there was a reception with a groaning table – irresistible home-made Swiss breads and pastries among ladybird chocolates for the children, with a huge ladybird chocolate centrepiece. Afterwards, we all danced to live Hungarian Romany music played on a violin and accordion.

The Bühlmans – Werner, his energetic wife, Theodora, a dance and movement therapist, and their children – live in a tiny village surrounded by lush green hills and streams. It is a house of great creative activity. An old wooden carnival mask hangs on the outside of their home, and Werner's sculptures are in the back garden. I fell asleep to and woke to the sound of a stream under my bedroom window high up in the house. Up the road from them is a Tibetan Institute with a stupa visited by Tibetan Buddhist followers from all around the area. It's a lovely 20-minute walk up the hill, and one can find peaceful refuge in the stupa area.

***Puppentheater Bleisch***

The second show of that weekend, *Mirko, das Borstenkind* (*Mirko, the Boar Child*), was a performance by Ursula and Hanspeter Bleisch of Puppentheater Bleisch, Henggart. The story comes from Siebenbürgen, a German-speaking region of Romania, and tells about a prince transformed into a boar by his mother when he doesn't behave. The fairy tale was first discovered and published by Friedl Lenz, an anthroposophist, in the 1950s. It was very lyrically performed by Ursula and Hanspeter, who do every aspect of the show, in the lovely Winterthurer Marionetten Theater.

After the performance, we had the pleasure of sharing the afternoon with Ursula and Hanspeter. A fierce-enough sun drove us from the sunny end of the garden to the depths, where we were shaded by very old and tall trees as we ate a delicious lunch of many courses prepared by the indefatigable Ursula. Joining us were Wolfgang Burn, Ruth Frauenfelder (see below), and the Bleisch's friend, neighbour, and costume designer, Ghiny. Among many other things, we discussed a major and perplexing question that plagues the Swiss-German puppeteers – the lack of young puppeteers. This was followed by a tour of their incredibly massive home. Inside, flowers and creativity everywhere, whether in the kitchen, studio, or rehearsal area.

The Bleisch family is full of puppeteers (three of the four children became puppeteers). Hanspeter's sister, Elisabetha, gives puppetry courses in Zürich for adults and children. Hanspeter was an architect's draughtsman, influenced by his father, who used puppets in a therapeutic way with youth and in prisons (before therapeutic puppetry was really understood). The senior Bleisch was a social worker at youth centres; his four children helped him. Also a sculptor and painter, he made basically the same kind of puppet that Hanspeter makes today, although Hanspeter has simplified the puppets a bit.

The Bleisches recently had a retrospective exhibition of their work at the Gewerbemuseum Winterthur and were quite pleased, as they had never had the opportunity to view all their work out and in one place at the same time. They were able to trace their company's history over 25 years.

We viewed a video of an avant-garde production of *The Fisherman and His Wife* that Hanspeter and Ursula worked on with children who attend a music hall. It was performed in a large industrial hall. It was a beautiful and strong collaborative effort, done with an ensemble of creative artists, musicians, and composers.

Ursula and Hanspeter have eight shows going now – four for children, four for adults. After 15 years, they are reviving *Astoria oder wievil Staat braucht der Mensch?*, a play by the Austrian playwright Jura Soyfer, who was murdered by the Nazis in 1939. The revival of this show, which made the Bleisches famous in the seventies, is mainly due to the prodding of Ursula Pfister, who, when programming the Zürcher

Puppen Theater season, wanted to find a good play for adults among the actual productions of Swiss companies.

### *Ruth Frauenfelder*

Ruth Frauenfelder from Geneva, is a very interesting puppeteer who works with glove puppets (she has a Kasper show) but is primarily known for Balinese performances. She studied under Ida Bagus Geria. She performs in High German except when doing voice work for the clowns, for whom she uses the Swiss-German dialect. Ruth is paid as an art teacher for the schools and can use this opportunity to do 80 shows per year for young children.

### *Elisabeth Schöneborn*

Rudolf Steiner and the anthroposophists loom large in Switzerland – their influence has been strong. Steiner wrote a wee bit about the puppetry he had seen in Berlin in the twenties – only marionettes of a neutral character who only reflected what was being narrated by the narrator on the right. An anthroposophist who already had a predilection towards puppetry, Elisabeth Schöneborn saw this and took it on, writing and producing about four plays. She made silk gauze curtains with scenes appliquéd on to them. These curtains were about six deep with lights either in front or behind, always opening up strong images. It was very technical work.

Schöneborn (who was actually German) began in the thirties with her puppetry, stopped during the war, and took it up again in the fifties and sixties, when most of her famous plays were created. As she was an artist, she was happy to have the works in the Goetheanum played and disseminated to people outside the anthroposophical movement. Gustav helped her greatly with this.

She died at the age of 84 in 1996, leaving her effects to the Goetheanum. One can read about her in the new book, *Elisabeth Schöneborn: Alles an Fäden... Ein Leben mit dem Puppenspiel* (Verlag am Goetheanum, Dornach, 1997). The book is described further in *Figura* No 19. In the book there are many reprints from *Figura* in its earlier incarnation as *Puppenspiel und Puppenspieler*.

### *Sophie Täuber Arp*

The Swiss honour an artist-puppeteer on a 50 franc note – Sophie Täuber Arp! The puppets from her production of *King Stag*, produced in 1918, were copied by Mel Myland of Eastbourne around 1994. He was able to do joints that were better than those possible in 1918. These reproductions were used for a performance at the Zürcher Puppen Theater. The original puppets are in a museum in Zürich. The curator was afraid they might be damaged by use in a performance – hence, the copies. Täuber-Arp's puppets were quite revolutionary in their appearance, resembling no other puppets at the time. Gustav's daughter, Sabine, a stained-glass artist and graphic designer, recreated the stage design and painted the puppets for this performance, after doing a considerable amount of research on the stage through black and white photographs and sketches.

It's a small world: My translator in Mexico for my February 1997 visit was actor Maya Schnellman, originally from Zürich, now living in Mexico City, and married to Luis Martín Solís, of Teatro Mite. She participated in the production, manipulating one of the marionettes.

This account will be completed in the next issue.

May we also extend our warmest congratulations to Gustav Gysin for his three decades of labour of love on *Puppenspiel und Puppenspieler/ Figura* – a momentous achievement. The new editor, Dr Elke Krafka, a graduate of the Institute of Theatre Science at the University of Vienna, can be contacted at Vereinigung für Puppenspeiel, Zentralstelle Postfach 501, CH-8401 Winterthur, Switzerland; tel/fax: +41 52 213 69 91. Having spoken to Mel Myland in his shop in Eastbourne about his work on the Täuber-Arp figures and having looked through his scrapbook there, I hope he may be able to write something about this for us at a later date.

## *Media Watch*

"They each insisted on having their own street," said Lewis Bernstein, producer of a joint Israeli-Palestinian version of Sesame Street, on the programme's teething troubles. Later I learnt more about this sorry tale in a piece on national humour in *The Economist*, 20 December 1997.

"The travails of the Sesame Street gang suggest that organising even light entertainment in this fraught part of the world is not easy. Producers of the beloved American children's programme were planning to launch an Israeli version that would promote mutual understanding between young Palestinians and Jews. The idea was to have Palestinian and Jewish muppet puppets appear in the same show, chatting amiably using a limited vocabulary of words that sound similar in Hebrew and Arabic.

"Alas, the Palestinian muppeteers did not want their muppets to live on the same street as the Jewish muppets. Americans tried to act as mediators. If Jewish and Palestinian muppets could not live on the same street, should there not at least be a park where they could play together, they suggested? The Palestinians asked: 'Who owns the park, Jews or Arabs?'"

By contrast the Hartzufim latex-puppet show, mentioned before in these columns, which guys Netanyahu (Mr & Mrs) and 'Arafat alike, continues to be a ratings success. One article I read (*The Guardian* 24 1 97) described Hartzufim as a Hebrew neologism which "translates approximately as 'crappy, cheeky faces.'" This would seem to make it a three-way portmanteau composed of *partzuf(im)* "face(s)," with the "h" representing *hara* "crap/shit," and *hatzu "impudent."* This year's Christmas Eve issue of *The Guardian* reported that puppets of Bibi and Yasir were "top gifts in Jerusalem."

On the last day of the year *The Telegraph* reported that such was the concern felt by the Israeli security forces in Jerusalem that unrest would be stoked up during Ramadan that, during it, Palestinians were to be prevented from firing their rusting, 1918-vintage British field gun, which sits atop a Muslim cemetery outside the walls of the Old City. Since Turkish times a gun has boomed out three times a day during the month of fasting. The task of firing it has been entrusted to several generations of the Sanduqah family. "It is a shame," said Raja'i Sanduqah, 36, a puppeteer by profession. "This cannon is a part of my life." Wonder whether the family name, which means "box," is related to the profession?

Came across an already yellowing cutting – a report by *The Guardian*'s Nick Cumming-Bruce, probably from 1996 – which says "Kelantan's resorts catering for foreign tourists are not allowed to sell alcohol. Traditional shows, such as the *wayang kulit* puppet theatres, are banned on the grounds that they provide opportunities for unacceptable contact between men and women." Kelantan, on the northeast coast, is where puppetry is concentrated in Malaysia.

"Tax Police Interested in Sesame Street" was the headline in *Russkiy Telegraf* (22 1 98). What had the street-dwellers done? It seems that Moscow's Tax Police are planning an episode of the children's serial with a tax theme. This is not the first experiment in reaching future taxpayers – they have already produced a "tax cartoon film." I hope they have more success than our Inland Revenue has had with Hector (as in the Bristow lookalike intended to get you to fill your self-assessment form in on time, rather than Punch's horse).

Peter Bradshaw related in *The Guardian* how, during the (eventually "victorious") libel case Alan "economical with the *actualité*" Clark was bringing against him for satirizing the Westminster Lothario's Diaries in *The Evening Standard*, Mr Justice Lightman could not find the right newspaper cutting. "He grimly announced: 'The article I have is headed: *Gerry Adams – isn't he the Thunderbirds man?*' I caught my sister's eye in the public gallery, started to laugh, and got a terrible glare from the usher."

Noticed that the person responsible for Wallace and Gromit's translation to "legit theatre" in *A Grand Night Out* is Andrew Dawson, the man behind the successful *Thunderbirds FAB* stage show.

"... imagine a sock puppet worked by a drunken Sooty operator" (Björk in concert, as described by a less-than-impressed Barbara Ellen, *The Observer*, 16 11 97). "... one of the smoothest operators on TV, was left spread-eagled on his sofa like a slack-jawed, ochre skinned puppet powerless to stem the flood of words gushing from [Ben] Elton's mouth" was how Sam Taylor (*The Observer*) saw Des O'Connor. Francis Wheen (*The Guardian*), fortified by a reading of Enid Blyton's definitive, multivolume chronicle of Toyland, saw Noddy as a Tony Blair clone – "a thoroughly wooden character... His main distinguishing feature is a tendency to nod and grin inanely, though he does see off some loony-left goblins." Big Ears is, of course, Mandelson. Tessie Bear is "probably based on Harriet Harman, though some scholars detect a resemblance to Tessa Jowell." There is a very cross farmer in the story called Mr Straw, but he, unlike his namesake, Jack, earlier identified as Wee Willie Winkie, is prepared to stand up to Mr Plod.

*The House That Sooty Built* (I'm sure I saw it with my nieces years ago) is the last show Matthew Corbett ("There's always the moral that I as the prat lose and Sooty wins.") will do before the bear and the gang become definitively part of Guinness Marn's assets. The last reference to Sooty I saw was in fact on the pages of *The Financial Times*.

Basil Brush (born 1964), having been relegated from the BBC back in 1980, with just a few appearances since – as guest manager on Fantasy Football League, for example – is back on the small screen this year. Whether to appease current sensitivities or not, he will have a new chum, a reformed hound called Harry.

"It is a show, a fantasy, and all is well at the end" was Wiltshire County Council's verdict on restoring to circulation a Punch and Judy book withdrawn from its library shelves following a complaint. Councillor Paul Sample, chairman of the Libraries, Heritage and Arts Sub-Committee, was quoted (*The Times*, 12 2 98) as follows: "This book stems from our cultural heritage. We have to be on our guard against our traditions being damaged by a tide of political correctness which is sweeping in from America. Punch and Judy are alive and well in Wiltshire." When you actually see the rather cleverly illustrated book in question – Ron Maris's *The Punch and Judy Book* – you do worry about the literalitis afflicting some members of the community. In addition to the newspaper and television coverage of the story here, it was picked up by an Australian newspaper, which devoted a whole page to it.

Attention to detail. Barbie's vital statistics (38-18-33 when transposed to human scale) are to be toned down, although no cellulite or varicose veins are planned. Biker Barbie, complete with Harley Davidson, is the latest to join the plastic ménage. Earlier, Becky arrived in a pink wheelchair. It has been pointed out, however, that Barbie's Dream House has no access ramp. The makers, Mattel, are on the case, examining ways to redesign the dwelling.

The My Twinn company from Colorado will manufacture a doll to resemble its owner, though they do not, of course, defecate or pick their noses. Just send a photograph.

Spitting Image puppets of Chirac, Mandela, Yeltsin, and Clinton were used to demonstrate what top-class customers can now expect from Midland Mainline (you get two meals, newspapers and magazines, alcoholic and non alcoholic drinks ... for your London-Sheffield £116 return). As a spokeswoman said: "There will be more space for third-class passengers [third class returned for the first time since the 1930s, on 5 January] because we anticipate more

people making use of the premier service." Let us hope no train hits an iceberg.

"Will Christianity be illustrated by anything more than a couple of dodgy looking puppets from the film *The Jesus Story*?"– asked *The Independent*'s Suzanne Moore in a piece about the PMT (premillennial tension) created by Peter Mandelson's Domesday 2000 project. It seems that the minister without portfolio, henceforth known as St Peter of Hartlepool, has got religion. *The Jesus Story* is an animated feature film on the life of Christ (Ralph Fiennes supplies his voice) being made to emphasize the Christian significance of the year 2000. I'm probably more favourable than most to French-style grand projects, but misgivings are bound to emerge when so much is being spent on a cupolaed theme park at the same time as the Arts Council is being forced to disburse standstill grants or make cuts, and moonlighting part-timers from the business world are being brought in to "run the show" at the Arts Council and the Royal Opera, though they can hardly do any worse at the latter. Given the very low baseline after almost two decades of the previous government, the present one will have to do a lot better than revamping the lottery (money for revenue as well as capital schemes).

Incidentally, WA Dwiggins wrote a melodrama for puppets called *Millennium I*. Time for a revival?

Japanese puppet companies were not only guests of honour at the last Charleville, the full panoply of Japanese theatre was also prominent during the Festival d'Automne in Paris. In an interesting two-page dispatch on *bunraku* in *Le Monde* (13 10 97), Jean-Pierre Thibaudat, a knowledgeable writer on Asian art, says: "at the start of the performance, the announcer gives the name of the reciter and the musician, but names none of the manipulators, even when these are national living treasures. '*Bunraku* is essentially a theatre to listen to rather than to see,' explained Professor Yasuo Kobayashi." In Cambodia's large shadow theatre, *nang sbek*, it is the reciter whom Khmer connoisseurs of the form regard unequivocally as the most important performer. There is, I suspect, a big difference – reasons for which can be found – between local and foreign perceptions here.

The three-stringed instrument which accompanies *bunraku* is the *shamisen*, and there is now a crisis in traditional musicmaking in Japan due to animal-rights activists protesting against the use of the cured skin of *felis catus* – it is tightly stretched over the instrument's soundbox. (See Richard Lloyd Parry's "Finale for the World's Most Elegant Use of a Dead Cat," *The Independent*, 15 11 97.) Dog, apparently, is used only for cheaper, practice instruments. Incidentally, Cambodian puppets are made from cowhide, although the figure of the highly revered ascetic used to be made of the skin of a panther or bear.

Item 164 in Ray DaSilva's latest catalogue, Harp's *Handbook of Christian Puppetry*, reminded me of a radio programme entitled *Gottle of Geer* (Radio 4, 4 1 98), in which Quentin Cooper and the ventriloquist Paul Zerdin, along with 400 others, attended the VEGAS 97 convention of ventriloquists. Two of the participants were "gospel ventriloquists" who put on a Jamboree of Faith, which included Taffy, a duck who helped present "God's word in a really unique way." The radio presenter "ducked out of the gospel event" to see the competing ventriloquial Adult Comedy Show going on next door. What a wonderful medium radio is for ventriloquism.

It was good to hear 10 minutes of discussion about puppetry in a mainstream arts programme (*Kaleidoscope*, 23 2 98), by people like Nick Barnes, Philippe Genty, and Gavin Glover, but it was also a report on Charleville. Now, no one is going to suggest that a puppetry festival is breaking news, it has a reasonable shelf life, but for a six-days--a-week programme to report on and from the Ardennes five months after the event without, incidentally, any reference to dates, is exaggerating more than a little.

## *Backstage Backbiting*

The speed with which Obraztsov items – even if they are in Russian – are snapped up from Ray DaSilva's catalogues is indicative of the abiding interest in the artist. When I visited the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre four years ago and had a long talk with its literary manager, Boris Goldovsky, this huge theatre was still in receipt of adequate state funding. Since then things have not been going well for the theatre (or, as the *Bulletin* has kept you informed, for the arts in general in Russia, it must be said) and I thought it would be useful therefore to translate the following article by Mariya Tereshchenko, which, with its facetious Dostoyevsky-echoing title, appeared in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta* (27 12 97). I shall try to ascertain the success or otherwise of the theatre's latest production.

## *Notes from the House of the Puppet: The Obraztsov Theatre's Plans*

It is a long time since the Obraztsov Puppet Theatre delighted its audience with anything new. There has not been a single premiere in the last four years unless you count the unsuccessful attempt to stage Saltykov-Shchedrin [considered by many to be the greatest satirist of 19th-century Russia]. The show was put on a few times, but then – to universal rejoicing – forgotten about once and for all.

Now, at last, things have started moving. The staging of Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* is in preparation. The premiere is planned for early February. Many people in the theatre see this show as a chance to overcome the current crisis. Perhaps Shakespeare will help solve the problems, so many of which have piled up in recent years?

Firstly, it is a budget-funded theatre; moreover, it is subsidized not out of the Moscow city budget but the federal one. We all understand perfectly well what that means: low wages and the need to prise out every kopeck.

Secondly, the number of tours has been drastically reduced. In the past, the company often performed outside of Moscow, therefore two groups persist to this day – one tours, the other rehearses in the capital. However, it is much more difficult to organize tours nowadays. It is easier for small theatres to travel than giants like the Obraztsov. So the two groups remain in Moscow and quietly quarrel with each other.

Thirdly, a host of conflicts have arisen within the collective itself, and quite a number of petty scandals have been associated with the theatre of late. Recently, for example, a story about damaged puppets (very badly damaged puppets were brought back from tours) was hyped, a press conference concerned with the splitting up of the collective was then scheduled. And it has to be said that by no means all the conflicts have become public knowledge. For example, Obraztsov's granddaughter has now arrived in the theatre. Many pin great hopes on her: Being the granddaughter, she will work for the good of the theatre. Another section, however, regards Yekaterina Obraztsova with great scepticism. Rumour has it that Obraztsov himself was not at all keen on his granddaughter working in the theatre and regarded her as not very capable. Yekaterina Obraztsova has now been appointed artistic director of one of the troupes and is getting ready to present [Pushkin's] *The Queen of Spades*. Perhaps in the future she will take over the currently vacant post of artistic director of the theatre. After all, since the resignation of Gabriadze, who did not go down well with the theatre (he proved unsuitable), all artistic questions have been settled by a special collegial panel. However, there is no point trying to guess whether the hopes of Obraztsova's supporters will prove justified or not, what is important here is that she has become yet another bone of contention, albeit, perhaps, only the latest excuse for scandalmongering.

It is not so easy to discover the real cause of the conflicts, particularly as some people simply deny their existence and describe all

the scandals as petty troublemaking, small beer, and nothing compared with the past. Others, on the contrary, exaggerate the significance of minor squabbles, and each new instance of unpleasantness becomes apocalyptic in nature in their accounts. One thing is clear: There is a feeling of unease in the theatre. Either people have been too long producing nothing new or someone, fearful of change, has been compulsively clinging to the familiar. And perhaps there is a lack of Obraztsov's firm hand (according to rumour, he was a real tyrant, keeping everyone in check).

Against the backdrop of all these events, the premiere of *The Comedy of Errors* is particularly important for the theatre. And it is not surprising that a lot of manpower, energy, time, and, of course, money has been put into it. The director, Reyn Agur, and the producer, Yelena Lutsenko, work on contract, and the work on the show is therefore making rapid progress. The show promises to be spectacular. There are lavish sets – a ghost-town reminiscent of a small fairy-tale town of the Renaissance period – a staggering number of puppets (around 130, if I am not mistaken), each of which has its own little secret (a young lady, for example, is equipped with pop-out steel jaws); and lavish costumes for the puppets, sewn in the Bolshoi Theatre workshop.

And, of course, the director's ideas are impressive, too. The show's action takes place against a carnival background: dances, music, and "live" scenes (that is to say, actors appear on stage). While the festivities are directed by a person called Time, who is to some extent a refashioned Shakespearean fool/jester, who is absent in the original. The director himself regards this figure as virtually the most important in the play. It is not for nothing that he is entrusted with the task of directing the carnival and that the most philosophical passages (Shakespeare and Camus) should issue from his mouth.

In short, the theatre is getting ready to show everyone what it can do and to prove that it can still beat all its rivals hands down.

## *Jan Wilkowski*

It was a shock for the Polish puppeteers – Jan Wilkowski died on December 22 1997, and on January 5 his funeral was attended by the artistic milieu, including theatre people, critics and his students. Time goes by quickly and we forget quickly. In Poland, however, Wilkowski will not be forgotten. His artistic work was so important and so influential that it will always nourish Polish puppetry and Polish theatre as it does now.

That was the reason for organizing a special memorial session, in the Lalka Theatre, which he ran for many years. It took place on February 23 with the aim of reviving his presence through talking about his work as a director, as a writer, as a splendid TV actor, and as a teacher of many generations of young puppeteers.

There were many speakers, researchers and critics who tried to convey the importance of Wilkowski's creativity, and there were many artists who remembered him as a man and a friend. There was also shown one of his last productions, which was called metaphorically *Confession in Wood*, the story of a sculptor confronted with his wooden, sometimes imperfect, sculpted figures.

Jan Wilkowski started his work in puppetry in 1950 as a young man, 29 years old. Soon he became a director and unquestionably the artistic leader of the Lalka Theatre. With the designer Adam Kilian, he produced in this theatre the most famous shows of Polish puppet theatre, such as *Guignol in Trouble* (1956) and *About Zwyrtala the Musician or How the Mountaineer Got to Heaven* (1958). He continued his artistic work up to 1985, when he produced *Dekameron 85*, a masterpiece of modern puppet theatre marked by high culture and good taste.

Many young puppeteers who are so courageous in searching for new means of expression do not know that they are following in the steps of Jan Wilkowski. He touched and invented every possible style and employed all the means of expressions so

fashionable in our time. Narrative theatre? You have it in *Guignol.* Metaphorical theatre? In all his productions Wilkowski used original, poetic metaphors. Object theatre? Again you will find it easily in the *Guignol mise en scène.* Humanism and social sensibility? Please look at *Zwyrtala.* Political irony? You will find it in *Dekameron 85* and many other of his productions.

Perhaps some of the British puppeteers remember *Zwyrtala* presented in the London festival of puppetry "Puppet Theatre '84" at the Shaw Theatre. There was also a meeting with Jan Wilkowski when he took pleasure in speaking about his creativity and his respect for our art which uses another language (in comparison with actors' theatre) but speaks about the same human problems.

We have lost a great artist and a great humanist.

Henryk Jurkowski, Feb 1998

Coincidentally, copies of *Zwyrtala, the Old Musician & the Angel* by Kazimierz Przerwa-Tetmajer came to light at The Puppet Centre in London the other day. This is a limited, numbered, 10-page edition, translated into English by B Mazur, with eight illustrations by Adam Kilian, one of which is illustrated here. It is the story of the play directed by Wilkowski, designed by Kilian, and presented by The Minatura Theatre from Gdansk. It tells of the old musician who went to heaven, where the angels so enjoyed his highland music that they neglected their celestial duties.

Saint Peter wanted to send Zwyrtala to one of the stars, but he refused to go and was allowed to return to his beloved Tatra mountains, proclaiming that his heaven is there – where his heart is. During the 1984 festival several of the Polish company went down sick, and Jan had to play several of the voices and puppets himself, which, Penny Francis informs me, "was nothing but a plus."

## *Corrections and Clarifications*

The first sentence of the last paragraph, page 18, of George Speaight's article in *Bulletin* No 96, should read: But then in 1986 there were published a number of texts of Pulcinella street shows as performed by Nunzio Zampella in 1979 and 1981, edited by Bruno Leone under the title *La Guatattella: burattini e burattinai a Napoli.*

## *Deadlines*

Copy for next *Bulletin* by 1 June, please. Copy should preferably be cleanly typed (photocopies and faxes tend to be smudgy and confuse the optical scanner) and single spaced. Copy for the May *Newsletter* by 1 April, which should be sent to Helen Fry and Mark Dobson, 5a Garnet House, Garnet St, Wapping, London E1 9QY; 0171 481 8732.

## *Wired*

Very basic, pro tem information on BrUNIMA can now be obtained by keying in The Puppetry Homepage on the Internet.
The UNIMA International General Secretariat's e-mail address is: sgi@unima.org

## *Forthcoming*

Conclusion of Swiss-German puppetry, Puppetry in Prison, Eco Puppets in the Danube Delta, Lorca and Puppetry, Henrik Kemény, Skupa and Voskovec+Werich, Belgian puppeteers' visit.

# Belgo-British Festival of Puppetry 6th - 10th May 1998

Wednesday 6th May 7.30pm
Little Angel Theatre
**The Selkie Bride**
by the resident company
Three-course meal and wine at 'Le Mercury' after the performance (walking distance from Little Angel)

Tickets £5.50* Concessions £4.50*
Little Angel Theatre
Tel: 0171 226 1787

Please send a cheque for £20 payable to BrUNIMA to J Phillips by March 31st.

Thursday 7th May 7.30 pm
The Barge Theatre
**A Shipful of Verse**
by the resident company

Tickets: £6.50* & £5.50*
The Barge Theatre
Tel 0171 249 6876

Friday 8th May 7.30pm
Little Angel Theatre
**The Legend of Tchantchès & Tranicula Le Terrible**
by Li Tèyâte dèl Clignète

Tickets £5.50*
Concessions £4.50*
Little Angel Theatre
Tel: 0171 226 1787

Saturday 9th May. All day at The Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham. Four Belgian companies and members of The Midlands Puppet Forum.

See separate leaflet for details.

Sunday 10 May
Covent Garden May Fayre,
All-day performances of Punch and Judy and other shows in and around St Paul's Church.

St Paul's Church 2.00pm
**La Tentation de Saint Antoine & The Legend of Manneken Pis**
by Ombres et Silhouettes

Tickets £5.00* at the door

The Theatre Museum (in the Picture Gallery) 3.00pm
**Le Robot Alphazet**
by Amstramgram

Tickets, including entry to the Museum £3.50*

St Paul's Churchyard 4.00pm
**Le Placard aux Balais**
by Le Théâtre pas Sage

Free – no tickets required

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